

PAGANISM in Christianity

Does it matter to YHVH, God Most High?

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Philip Shields sermons

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Summary:

Could paganism be part of your worship without you even realizing it? Paganism has infiltrated our conversations, our language, our worship. Does it matter to Yehovah? If we know something we're involved in has pagan roots, isn't it OK as long as we "know in our hearts" that we're really worshiping the true God? What about Christmas? If we "keep Christ in Christmas", doesn't that make it OK? Read what Yehovah says. Find out.

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Welcome, brothers and sisters to Light on the Rock. By now most of you who frequent this website may know that I do my best to stick to what Scripture says, and I try to avoid traditions and customs of mankind IF they go against Scripture. And I especially try to avoid paganism in my worship and teaching if I'm aware of it.

Today I want to talk about how much of Christianity is just laced with paganism. Sure, we'll start with some comments about Christmas, and its pagan roots, but that's not the focus of this sermon. **I want us to look *beyond* Christmas and begin to see just how much paganism we all have absorbed, in many cases – without even realizing it.**

Some people conclude that anyone who says anything about Christmas' pagan roots must somehow be against Jesus and his birth. *To any of you who are new to this website, let me first say this: When it comes to the birth of my Saviour, I love the fact that Father sent His spirit into a virgin named Mary and gave us the gift of His Son, who died for our sins. I love that. But, the story of Yeshua's birth has NOTHING to do with the original pagan festivities that were going on strongly on Dec 25, long before He was ever born! Did you realize that? Some of you don't know that, but I suspect most of you coming to this site do know that.*

So as I speak about paganism in Christianity, and even about the error of the Christmas story where they try to put Joseph and Mary in a manger on a Dec 24-25 Christmas eve— don't think I'm against my Savior or the story of his nativity. I'm NOT. **But Jesus' birth had nothing to do with Christmas – even though that's what you hear today. Just Google it yourself. Go to the library.** Look up "Origins of Christmas" or even "pagan origins of Christmas". It will be far more shocking to you if you do your own digging and researching.

Did you know that the early Puritans even banned Christmas in America for years, because they were aware of its pagan origins? Check it out! In 1841, Queen Victoria's husband brought the Christmas tree to Windsor castle in England. It soon took hold everywhere, though in Germany and other places, it had long been an established tradition already – from pagan days centuries before. We've come a long way since then. Now in 2012,

President Obama has 54 Christmas trees throughout the White House. Fifty four! Check it out.

Is it OK as long as we put God's Name on the Pagan Events?

But today I want to go well beyond just talking about Christmas. So I pose this question throughout this teaching: If we put the name of Jesus, or Christ, or God into our festivities and things we do – if the activity was a PAGAN event originally, does that make it alright with our heavenly Father? Will the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and Peter and Paul be happy with us putting His name on pagan customs, if we just claim that “NOW we're worshipping God, not pagan gods”? Will He feel honored – or not?

I've been to Rome a couple of times and what is so striking to me is this: so many of their famous churches and basilicas were formerly *pagan* worship centers. One major one is called the **Pantheon**. It's very impressive outside and inside – but it was a temple to ALL the gods, hence “Pantheon”. It was rebuilt by Emperor Hadrian around 120 AD and dedicated to all their pagan gods. Let me ask: is it OK with the one true living God to use this building to worship Him?

NO! Over and over we can read in Scripture that YHVH commanded Israel to tear down and burn the pagan worship places. It doesn't make something better to put Father's holy name on something PAGAN – something vile and disgusting to Him. No, it makes it worse. We'll read a few of the many verses on this in a few minutes.

But for us to understand how much paganism has come into “Christian” worship, we need to go back and look at the first believers. What were they like? How have we changed? Would they recognize us as true believers if they could visit us somehow? We now have over 2 billion people who claim to be Christians. How much has this group changed from what we read in the book of Acts? How much paganism has become a part of our worship?

What is the CHURCH, really – the Ekklesia, the called-out ones, the Elect

I'll keep this part real simple.

- The Elect, **the “church” is a body of people** around the world whom Father called to be His first fruits of children and who responded, repented, turned to Him and received His spirit after baptism and the laying on of hands. This group is also called the Body of Christ and we are immersed/baptized into His Body upon receiving His Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13; Ephesians 1:22-23).

So “we ARE the church” – we don't “GO to church”. I know, I have a hard time eradicating that phrase (“go to church”).

- Scripture refers to this group as the “ekklesia” – the called-out ones; from a similar Greek word we get the English words “chosen” and “elect”. We are being called out of the world to be a holy, special people of God – not like everyone else. What guides us now is the Holy Spirit. Those who are led by the Spirit are the children of God (Romans 8:14).
- **This body is to act like a family – not a hierarchy.** We don't want, don't have, anyone lording it over us (1 Pet. 5:5), though Yehovah has given us some

deeply converted elders, or spiritually older brothers in the faith. This is about our new spiritual family. Yeshua identified His spiritual brothers and sisters as those who do Father's will (Matthew 12:48-50). God is our Father. Yeshua is our older brother. The rest of us are brothers and sisters to him and to each other.

Encouragingly: Yeshua is not ashamed to call us His brother or sister (Hebrews 2:10-11). He wants us interacting as a family does – because that is what we ARE: God's FAMILY. And God's family worships the way HE tells us to, not just any old way we choose!

- This is why Yeshua so often said, **“You are brothers”** or its equivalent. *He did not want classes of people* in the church. But that's what we ended up with: a class structure. Priests and parishioners, clergy and laity. No! We're all in this together, not in different classes.
- **This body of believers was never confined and never will be – to any organization of man.** *Our Father does not limit Himself to one denomination or organization.* Don't box Him in! He no longer needs to be worshiped from a holy mountain or building, Jesus said in John 4. In the past we have had church groups claiming to be **“the one true church”**. No, believers are scattered into many denominations and groups and fellowships. In any group, some are converted (led by God's spirit) and some are not. Father will not box Himself in to any one organization. Organizations tend to think like you belong to them. We do not belong to this or that church – ***we belong to Christ (Mark 9:41)***.
- ***In the early church, they met in homes and spoke as the spirit led them.*** *Read 1 Cor. 14. Everyone had something to do or say. Today we have largely muted Christ's voice by telling everyone to sit quietly in rows and just listen.*
- **True believers are likened to wheat in a wheat field**, in the Parable of the Sower (explained in Matthew 13:18-23). The field is the world, Yeshua said. Tares are a kind of weed in a wheat field that look like wheat to the casual observer. But they have no real head, no fruit, no grain. ***No wheat can be a tare. But all wheat are wheat. A tare cannot be in a wheat plant*** – but can be in the field, which Jesus explained is the “world”. But scattered among the wheat in the wheat field, are *tares: those who look and act like they're believers* (wheat). Some of these tares, among the true believers, look good, and may even be deacons, leaders or elders. Some are regular brethren without titles. (Remember we're a family.)

In the same way, many people who mingle with believers, who claim to be Christians, might look and sound like Christians – are just “tares”. They look like wheat but have no fruit and are just weeds.

- God's children treat one another and all people with profound respect. Look at **1 Timothy 5:1-2**. Even the elders were told to speak respectfully to older women as they would their own Mom, to older men as their own Fathers, and to regard the young women of the church as sisters, with all purity. Women are not lesser members in the body in any way. **See 1 Tim. 5:1-2 for more detail on this.**
- **Women are to be accepted as equals in the body**, co-heirs together of the grace of life, though we have different *functions* assigned by our Master. Much of

what I've learned over the years has come from spirit-led women. Paul says spiritually there is no longer any difference between Greek or Jew, bond or free, male or female (Gal. 3:26-29).

In all the above I have come to see my own shortcomings in years past but truly see us all today as brothers and sisters.

Whether I'm talking about 7th day sabbath keepers, Catholics or Protestants – how much paganism has come into our fellowship? *Would Peter and Paul feel comfortable in our church services? Would they feel at home with the way we have “church services”?* I've had some adjusting and repenting to do as well. Let's keep going.

TRUE WORSHIP IS ABOUT LOVING RELATIONSHIPS TO GOD AND MAN

As we go through this topic – my salient point is to remember **what Father wants is a close RELATIONSHIP with His family**, with His kids.

Religion often gets in the way of that. By “religion” I mean the liturgy, the rules and traditions, the customs from men, the buildings – everything that come from men trying to gain control of what you believe and who you donate to. Much of the liturgy is laced in paganism (our order of events, the words we say, who does what and when).

You might want to check out a book called “Pagan Christianity” by Frank Viola. I do NOT agree with everything in that book, but it's worth a read. You will be blown away by his well-documented research about how much of our “Christian” worship is rooted in paganism.

The main thing is this: your involvement with a church or group of people should be leading you to a closer walk with your Father and with Yeshua. You pray more, you're feeling closer to God, experiencing more answered prayers. Your fellowship group should be so exciting that they're causing you to dig into His word more on your own. You're talking with Yehovah many times a day. You're WALKING with God and enjoying the relationship.

If your fellowship group isn't causing all that, then you're with a fruitless group and maybe you should ask Father to show you where He really wants you.

By contrast, Everything Satan does is contrary to what I've just said. Everything Satan does is geared to ruining your relationship with God and how close you are with fellow mankind. He *hates* good relationships.

Satan knows God hates being worshiped with paganism – just hates it as I've shown you – and so Satan gets Christians including paganism in their worship, just like he inspired them in the gold calf incident. Remember? They thought they could just put Yehovah's name on the gold calf and everything would be OK. But YHVH was FURIOUS! That sin almost destroyed that relationship between God and Israel.

Sin destroys relationships with Abba, and with your family of believers until you TURN BACK, which is the real meaning of “repent”. *So Satan is not so much about getting us to sin per se as he is trying to USE that sin to cut us off from God and to ruin friendships.* He wants the consequences of sin: to ruin marriages, ruin good will. Oh how I know that sin

does that! I've done more than my share of it and don't like the consequences of sin at all. "Your sins have cut you off from me...." (**Isaiah 59:1-2**)

So remember – Satan's number one aim is to sever our ties to our Maker and to one another. SIN does that. Satan's aim in getting us to sin ***is to ruin RELATIONSHIPS, cause anger, cause hate, cause wars, cause divorce.***

But FATHER'S TRUE RELIGION is all about love for our Father and for one another. That's what our God is all about! Father is all about us restoring all things, restoring our relationship with Him, restoring our marriages, turning our hearts back to our children and they to us.

Remember what the greatest doctrines are? What would you say? Most of us would say we'd draw a line in the sand on the SABBATH, or God's holydays, and many of you act like the greatest doctrines are not eating pork and crab, or not keeping pagan holidays. Those things are things we should be aware of, but the greatest teaching is that we are to love God with all our heart, soul and being, with all our strength – and to love fellow man as ourselves. That's what Yeshua answered, when asked, "what are the two greatest commandments".

God wants to walk with us. You walk with friends and family. He wants a close relationship.

So one more thing Satan – the adversary – does is to make us THINK we're worshipping God, when we're actually doing something Father actually HATES! Satan knows this does not help our relationship with God, but he's good at making US feel like what we're doing is OK with God. No – Father hates us worshipping Him the way pagans worship their gods. I'll prove it as we go along. Well, in fact let's look at a couple things now:

VITAL, RELEVANT Lesson from the Sin with the Golden Calf

You know **the gold calf incident** of Israel in the wilderness, right? You're about to see something profound in this story. In Aaron's eyes, they were not worshipping the gold calf – but Yehovah! Let's read it.

Exodus 32:1-4

Now when the people saw that Moses delayed coming down from the mountain, the people gathered together to Aaron, and said to him, "**Come, make us gods (elohim) that shall go before us;** for as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him."

2 And Aaron said to them, "Break off the golden earrings which are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me." 3 So all the people broke off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them to Aaron. 4 And he received the gold from their hand, and he fashioned it with an engraving tool, and made a molded calf.

Then they said, "These are your gods (elohim), O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!"

They said the idol- the gold calf-- was the god who brought them out of Egypt (Ex. 32:3). That was bad enough, but it's about to get worse. Aaron was going to try to rationalize and justify this by at least cloaking this grievous sin with the name of Yehovah (the LORD). Will

this make it better? Is that what people mean when they say “Christmas, though pagan, is about the birth of Jesus in my heart”? Is it OK to have a pagan celebration – whether to a gold calf or Christmas – as long as we say *we’re* really worshiping the true God in our hearts?

Look what happens next. Perhaps Aaron had absorbed this idea too that paganism isn’t too bad if we drape it with God’s holy name.

Let’s pick up when Aaron saw all the gold they were bringing in for the gold calf.

Exodus 32:5-6

5 So when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it. And Aaron made a proclamation and said, "**Tomorrow is A FEAST TO YHVH** [improperly translated YHVH]." 6 Then they rose early on the next day, offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play [to revel].

The word for “feast” in Exodus 32 is ***hag*** – meaning “festival”, the same word also used for the Feast of Tabernacles or Feast of Weeks. **Aaron was proclaiming a holy feast day to Yehovah while they worshiped the detestable idol, that gold calf!! “Let’s keep YHVH in our worship”, went the rationale.** No wonder Yehovah wanted to kill Aaron too, and would have - except for Moses’ intercession (Deut. 9:19-20)!

Do you still think it is OK to mix and match paganism with the worship of Holy God? So many “Christians” say they don’t have “idols” per se, while hanging on to the horrible pagan practices that have been cloaked in the name of Christianity to our shame!

Are you getting what happened here? Aaron told them the pagan gold calf might be alright as long as we re-label it as “a feast to YEHOVAH!” HOW is that any different to what has happened with Christmas? There were pagan December 25 Christmas-like celebrations in the Middle East long before the birth of the Messiah! Dec 25 was the birthdate of Mithra and other gods in the area. Several had that date. How did that happen? Remember Nimrod of the Bible? Some future time I’ll show how Nimrod and his mother Semiramis were the original pagan mother–and-child. Do your own research! It’s easy to search out. It will impress on you more if you research it yourself.

After Elohim scattered the rebels at Babylon, they took their pagan worship with them all around the world. Let me know if you want the full story of Nimrod and his mother, and what they did, and how that poisoned religion everywhere. Let me know and if enough ask for it, I’ll give a full sermon on it.

So please research the pagan roots of Christmas yourself. Be looking for it on the History Channel. Go on, Google “Pagan origins of Christmas”. It would be better for you to see it for yourself than for me to say it.

Did you know the Puritans (Early settlers in America) banned Christmas in America because of its pagan origins?

My point is this: even if anyone’s heart desire is to “Keep Christ in Christmas”—go back to the lesson of the gold calf. *Christ never was in Christmas!* God hates pagan worship. God

hates it especially when people calling themselves after Christ try to worship Him with pagan roots. Can I make that any clearer?

Paul says in **1 Cor. 10:20-22** that we must not mix worship of our heavenly holy Father with anything to do with paganism who worship demons. Read **Jeremiah 10**—and see how we are to avoid the customs of the gentiles. Jeremiah 10 speaks of cutting a tree down from the forest and bringing it home and then decking it in gold and silver. Sound familiar? Whether Jeremiah 10 is specifically about Christmas trees or about carving idols, it makes little difference. The parallels are striking.

What YHVH says about putting HIS HOLY NAME on to PAGANISM

So we see God's clear anger at Israel putting Yehovah's holy name on to their idolatrous gold calf worship. He almost wiped them out for that. It didn't make it better; it made it worse when they tried to cloak their pagan worship with HIS name!

There are more clear verses, so let's read a few more.

Obelisks

Ex. 34:11-14: God tells Israelites when they enter the Promised Land, to DESTROY the pagan altars, break the former inhabitants' obelisks (the obscene sacred pillars – like those which now decorate the square at St. Peters Basilica in Rome). Obelisks are part of pagan worship. You see EGYPTIAN-carved ancient obelisks dotting the landscape of Rome. At least 2 are in London, right on the bank of the Thames. We have our own famous obelisk – the Washington monument – in our capital city. Obelisks come from ancient pagan phallic worship and we should have nothing to do with it.

One of the first things God told Gideon to do, before Yehovah could work with Gideon, was to destroy the obscene pillar that his father had (Judges Read it yourself.).

But just as pagans put these obscene pillars at their places of worship, what do we see on so many of our "Christian" churches? STEEPLES. Research their history yourself. They're linked to the same roots as the obelisks. Our meeting places must NOT have steeples.

Back to Exodus 34:13. The KJV is a bit timid here compared to what the original Hebrew was saying! It's not just about breaking images or cutting "down their groves" (KJV). What does that tell you? The word there for "groves" in the KJV is about the Asherah poles, what were originally phallic pillars that STILL dot our land as obelisks and steeples. It was not a grove, it was an erect tree trunk that was carved and worshiped. These erect pillars were associated with the goddess of sex or fertility, especially Asherah, Astarte, Ishtar (Easter). Have you ever wondered what the fertility symbols of rabbits and Easter eggs have to do with Christ? NOTHING! It's rooted in paganism.

Here's what the Apologetics Study Bible says:

Exodus 34:13

13 Instead, you must tear down their altars, smash their sacred pillars, and chop down their Asherah poles.

On your own, if you have a Topical Study Bible, look up “Asherah” and read it for yourself. If I get any more explicit, I’d have to put an “X” rating on this sermon. She was the pagan goddess of fertility and was worshiped with erect pillars. Need I say more? We have NO business having steeples or obelisks in our land or in our places of worship. Period.

And this is why I do NOT keep the holidays that have such awful pagan roots. And though we cloak them with Christian labels, my Bible says that makes Yehovah even MORE angry to put HIS set-apart holy name on to pagan worship days and call them Christian!

Numbers 33:50-54

50 Now YHVH spoke to Moses in the plains of Moab by the Jordan, across from Jericho, saying, 51 "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'When you have crossed the Jordan into the land of Canaan, 52 then you shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you, *DESTROY all their engraved stones, DESTROY all their molded images, and demolish all their high places*; 53 you shall dispossess the inhabitants of the land and dwell in it, for I have given you the land to possess.

Why is it that so many of our church buildings are at the “high places” in town? The highest hill or whatever? And why the steeples?

Based on Numbers 33:50-54, any true Christians would never worship the true Creator with anything pagan. He HATES it. The Pantheon should have been leveled and burned! This instruction is repeated in Deut 7:5, 25 and many other places.

In fact, get this – when some of Judah’s or Israel’s kings ever brought idols and Asherah poles to the House of YHVH, the temple – this made Yehovah FURIOUS! I’ll read one part of one example from King Asa:

1 Kings 15:13-14

13 Also he removed Maachah his grandmother from being queen mother, because she had made an obscene image of Asherah. And Asa cut down **her obscene image and burned it by the Brook Kidron.**

Again, in this case, the KJV translates it very tepidly : “She had made an idol in a grove”. It was much worse than that. Our holy Father, the only one true God (John 17:3), is to be set-apart. He does not want HIS worship mixed with obscene pagan worship. His children -- YOU and I -- have been called to be SET APART, AND HOLY. If you haven’t heard my sermon on Guarding Holiness – check it out (Sept 2011 on this website)

The link: <http://www.lightontherock.org/audio/guarding-holiness-s.mp3>

Now turn to Deut 7:26. Should we be bringing pagan souvenirs of pagan gods into our homes? “But it’s just a souvenir, Philip” – I can hear it already. Take it up with Yehovah. This is what HE says and the context is pagan idols and pagan worship paraphernalia.

Deuteronomy 7:26

26 Nor shall you bring an abomination into your house, lest YOU be doomed to destruction like it. You shall utterly detest it and utterly abhor it, for it is an accursed thing.

I personally would advise you NOT to have “souvenirs” of pagan idols. Apostle Paul tells us also not to “mix and match” His Holy worship with paganism in 2 Corinthians 6:14-18. Light has no communion with darkness.

2 Corinthians 6:14-18

14 Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? 15 And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? 16 And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said:

"I will dwell in them
And walk among them.
I will be their God,
And they shall be My people."

17 Therefore
"Come out from among them
And be separate, says the Lord.
Do not touch what is unclean,
And I will receive you."

18 'I will be a Father to you,
And you shall be My sons and daughters,
Says the Lord Almighty."

Now this is where Christmas comes in. All over the land in this season, pastors are reading the 2 gospel accounts about the birth of Jesus. Interesting though: 2 of the 4 gospels say NOTHING about the birth of Jesus (Yeshua, His Hebrew name meaning Salvation). ***In fact NONE of the Biblical accounts tell us what day it was.*** If knowing the exact day was that important, we'd have been told!

Most of the sabbath-keeping believers I know understand the math that shows he was born in the autumn. Many of us feel He might have been born on what is the day of Trumpets, Yom Teruah, one of our Father's holy days. Others feel he was born on the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot) and the “manger” was possibly a booth? Either way, the FALL makes mathematical sense. Hear my sermon on it. But it wasn't in December. December can be very rainy in Bethlehem and even cold. In some years they've had snow in Jerusalem/Bethlehem in December. So no shepherds would have been out there at night by then.

For all the details on the TRUE story of His birth, and it wasn't in December --hear and see my sermon about the true story of Jesus birth – see December 2009 on this website. Also click here: <http://www.lightontherock.org/audio/JesusBirthTRUEStory.mp3>

I might, if I were giving that teaching today, offer some other alternatives to what the “star” might have been that the magi followed. But remember, the “star” brought them to the very spot they needed to be in.

The Wise Men

In that teaching on the True Story of Jesus' Birth, I show that scripture says nothing about the number of magi. There were three *gifts*, but the number of wise men is not mentioned in scripture (Matt. 2:1). Neither are they named anywhere in scripture. All that is conjured up somewhere other than scripture. Nor did they visit him in the manger, but in a *house*. By this time Yeshua was a toddler – and so no wonder Herod killed all the children in Bethlehem ages TWO and under (Matthew 2:16).

Matthew 2:11

11 **And when they had come into the house**, they saw **the young Child** with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

But the larger point I'm making is this: as wonderful the birth of our Savior was, there were Saturnalia Dec 25 celebrations going on long before His birth in the autumn. Hear my sermon – **Dec 2009** – for all the details. December 25 was a pagan celebration that SOME of the early so-called Christians adopted, as a way to bring in the pagans into Christianity while letting them keep their cherished PAGAN celebrations!

If you hated pagan traditions, would you feel better somehow if “your people” now put YOUR holy name on to those pagan traditions and associated your birth as a human with those days (even though your birth was nowhere near Dec 25!)? You'd hate it even more! Remember the lesson of the Gold Calf. It made Him MORE angry when they called the worship of the gold calf a “feast of YHVH”! (Translated ‘the LORD’ in your English Bibles)

That is why we have things at Christmas that have nothing to do with the birth of the Messiah! What on earth do these have to do with the birth of the Son of God?

- mistletoe, Christmas trees, yule log, egg nog, wreaths, the Santa Claus-and-his-flying reindeer lie (are we not commanded never to lie or bear a false witness?)

So please understand: I celebrate Christ, but do NOT have anything to do with Christmas. Christ never was in Christmas! We must worship God in spirit and TRUTH (John 4:24) and there's a lot untrue about Christmas customs. So we end up telling our children lies about flying reindeer and Santa Clause. How is that godly? In fact, there's a lot pagan about it.

I've already shown you a few verses where God tells us – DON'T MIX my worship with theirs! OK, let's read another passage that makes it SO clear how Yehovah feels:

Deuteronomy 12:29-32

29 "When Yehovah your God cuts off from before you the nations which you go to dispossess, and you displace them and dwell in their land, 30 take heed to yourself that you are not ensnared to follow them, after they are destroyed from before you, and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, 'How did these nations serve their gods? I also will do likewise.'

31 **You shall not worship Yehovah your God in that way; for every abomination to Yehovah which He hates they have done to their gods; for they burn even their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods.**

32 **"Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it."**

OK, so nobody is burning their kids in the fire to their gods. But still, the verse stands on its own – with YHVH saying, “DON’T think it pleases me to worship me with pagan customs!”

So I want to spend most of the rest of this message on other pagan things we do – there are hundreds of pagan things we’ve adopted in western culture. I do recommend you hear/read my full sermon Dec 2009 on the topic. SO this is why I don’t keep Easter, I don’t keep Valentine’s Day, Halloween is very despicable to me, or even New Year’s Day. These are all rooted in paganism.

The Truth about Mary, and other things tied in to the Christmas story

But just before we leave Christmas, there are other things that people believe that simply isn’t Biblical:

- **Mary did not remain a virgin** after giving birth to Yeshua. She had at least 6 more named children. I’ll read the passage in Matthew 13:54-57, but if you like more confirmation, look up these verses also: John 7:1-5, 10; Mark 3:31-35.

Matthew 13:54-57

54 When He had come to His own country, He taught them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished and said, "Where did this Man get this wisdom and these mighty works? 55 Is this not the carpenter's son? **Is not His mother called Mary? And His brothers James, Joses, Simon, and Judas? 56 And His sisters,** are they not all with us? Where then did this Man get all these things?"

Though we’re told that Yeshua’s brothers didn’t believe in him initially, we know that at least two of them became very active among active believers:

- James – the brother of Jesus, wrote the book of James. (The other James the apostle, was martyred in Acts 12:1-2).
- Judas – was the one who wrote the book of Jude

Acts 1 indicates at least 2 became believers.

Acts 1:14

These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women **and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.**

- **MARY was not sinless.** She did not have an “immaculate conception”. SCRIPTURE, our guide, says *all* have sinned and need a Savior, even Mary (Romans 3:23).
- **Neither was Mary supernaturally beatified and taken to heaven.** NO human - other than Yeshua – has ascended to heaven (John 3:13).
- **NOR is she our Mediator. We have but ONE mediator we pray to, and that is Yeshua (1 Tim. 2:5; 1 John 2:1).** Mary would be horrified to see how she is worshiped today. She is in the grave, awaiting her resurrection. That’s when her Son returns with the shout of the archangel and the trumpet of God at the last trump (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). In her next conscious moment, she will behold – and WORSHIP – her Son who will return to earth as the Lion of Judah, King of Kings and her Savior. God SPEED that day!

- **PAGANISM in Christianity includes the custom in some churches of praying to Mary and to the saints. Please don't do that.** We don't pray to angels, people or saints – especially dead ones. Yeshua himself said we are to “worship the LORD your God, and HIM ONLY shall you serve” (Matthew 4:10; Luke 4:8)

So back to the high view of some of the many pagan things we have in modern Christianity. I've mentioned a few already – obelisks, steeples, Christmas and its many parts like Christmas trees, yule logs.

OTHER PAGANISM IN CHRISTIAN culture

SO we're about to get into much more, but first – what is TRUE WORSHIP really all about?

- Is the way we worship in churches with ministers in long robes and vestments the way Peter and Paul preached? NO! That all came from the early Roman church copying the civil garb of the rulers.
- What about the LITURGY – the order of services at church? Even the “basilica” was modeled after the civil meeting places. They had a big seat for the judge, so the Roman church copied that. They called the chair “the cathedra”.
- **What about the very words we use in our daily lives?** How many of them come straight from paganism? Hint: a LOT.

All the planets' names, all the days of the week, almost all the months of the year. Janus, Mars –March; April – the roman god of new openings; Juno – June – goddess of weddings.

Even everyday words are loaded up with the names of gods and personages in pagan mythology: fortune, fortunate, echo, harp, cereal (from goddess Ceres), insomnia – from Somnus the god of sleep (Somnus was the Roman equivalent of the Greek Hypnos – the god of sleep.). Believe me, I could go on and on.

We wear Nike shoes – the pagan god of victory. We drive cars named after pagan gods like Saturn, Taurus, Equinox, Solstice and Mercury.

Can you see why one of the first orders of business in the coming Kingdom of Yeshua on earth will be to clean up our language? Zephaniah 3:9 speaks of a pure tongue, a pure language. No longer will the first day be called “the Day of the Sun” and the 2nd day, “the Day of the Moon” – and on and on through all 7 days, remembering pagan gods like Woden, Thor, Saturn and so on.

Zephaniah 3:9

9 "For **then I will restore to the peoples a pure language,**
That they all may call on the name of YHVH, To serve Him with one accord. “

So we will someday have a clean, pure language. **ONE reason given here is so that Father does not have to be talked to and worshiped with words that often come out of paganism,** and we don't even know we're using those pagan words.

Paganism lurks everywhere in our culture and language. Eros, Cupid, Narcissistic, Adonis, Aphrodite, Hercules (herculean), Titans – titanic – named after invincible gods; all these words and hundreds more, have pagan roots!

All the PLANETS – Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Neptune, Saturn, Uranus, Pluto and so on – all names of pagan gods.

Now don't misunderstand. We live in this world. TO communicate, we use the pagan names. Even Daniel and his three friends were renamed by names of pagan gods and they had to allow it, to be able to function. (Daniel 1:6-7) Even WE know them by their pagan names – Shedrach, Meschach, and Abed-Nego – all related to pagan gods! So the change of words and language will happen when our King returns, but until then if I'm referring to the first planet, I have to say Mercury.

Back to Zephaniah 3:9 -- Notice our God has a name. This TOO, has gotten hijacked by the pagan influences. My God: I call him Father or Abba, but He has a name. He is called many things and described as many things, just as I am described as “father, husband, brother, salesman, minister, old man” or whatever, and I have a name.

Even the NAME OF YHVH

The living true God is also God Almighty, for example, but He tells us over and over His *name* is YHVH (Yahweh or perhaps Yehovah). Yeshua even said, “Hallowed be your name” – singular. Yes, His name is A SACRED name, Jesus said so, though I am NOT a part of the “Sacred Names movement”. **But Isaiah 57:15 DOES say “Whose name is HOLY...”** Psalm 111:9 KJV – Holy and reverend is HIS name. (Singular).

So many believers say God has many names. But somehow YHVH Himself talks about His ONE name – singular. I am aware of Isaiah 9:6, but the rest of the time He says His name is one, in the singular.

Yes, our God's name YHVH is sacred, is holy. But He wants us to KNOW it, speak it, use it reverently – not hide it or change it to Adonai or the Lord or HaShem (the Name).

Please hear or read my sermons on the name of our Creator – see October 2011 on this website. I consider those 2 sermons to be among my most important messages.

One of the serious, serious wrongs that has to be righted is that God's NAME – YHVH – has been erased from His holy word almost 7,000 times and replaced with a title – “the LORD”. YHVH does not sound like that or mean the Lord. He gave us His book and used His name almost 7,000 times in there, more than all the other so-called names of God put together! And so humans took His most PERSONAL name – Yahweh -- and changed it and removed it. Wherever you see “the LORD” in all caps, that is when it is YHVH in the Hebrew.

What does the Eternal Living God say His name is? (in English it says the wrongly translated “the LORD”):

Ex. 15:3 “... YHVH is His name.” (your Bible will say “the LORD”)

Isaiah 42:8 – “I am YHVH, *that* is My name....”

Jeremiah 32:18 “.....the Great, the Mighty God, whose name is YHVH of Hosts.”

Jer 16:21 – “.....and they shall know my name is YHVH”

Psalm 83:18 – KJV

“That men may know that thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH, art the most high over all the earth.”

(There’s no J sound in Hebrew, so they would have said Yehovah – with the emphasis on the last syllable.) Anyway, I gave 2 sermons on His name – please hear them:

Strangely, KJV and other translations retained the names of the *pagan* gods, they left them untranslated – like Baal, Marduk, Molech, Dagon, and so many others, but removed the true God’s name.

So that’s another thing we have to correct and get back to: stop changing His name to “the Lord” – a title – and start saying and using His Name. He WANTS us to use it. If you doubt this at all, PLEASE hear my sermons about His NAME (October 2011). I used to think YHVH was pronounced “Yahweh”, but in recent times I’ve come to learn that the oldest manuscript written with the letters YHVH, along with the vowel points, goes back to 650 BC, and with the vowel points, it’s clearly in that manuscript “YehoVAH” -- Emphasizing the last syllable.

Would Early Believers Even Recognize us as the Body of Christ?

Would Peter, James and John and Paul and Timothy and Luke – even recognize Christianity today? It is so full of paganism today – whether the Catholic or Protestant version – that it has little semblance to the original model.

- Would Peter ever have been treated like a sovereign, with expensive robes, and a building whose parts of its ceilings are covered in gold? Would he have let people prostrate themselves before him, kiss his ring and bow to him? Absolutely not!
- Would the early believers, who were the persecuted ones, ever dream that future so-called Christians would be the ones perpetrating the most vicious tortures done in the name of Jesus and in the name of the Church? Could they have imagined the Spanish Inquisition? Or the violence and sins perpetrated by the Crusades?
- **TITLES:** Why do protestant ministers use the title “reverend” – when “reverend is HIS name” (Psalm 111:9). And priests, even young priests, are called “father”, contrary to Matthew 23:9? And the Pope is called “Holy Father” – the same title Yeshua used when speaking to God Almighty above (John 17:11). How about “Pontifex Maximus” – which was the title the leader of pagan god worship used?

Yeshua taught us NOT to lord it over one another. NOT to be vain and lofty. OUR Saviour said to be humble. So why do clergy exalt themselves with titles like the heathen do? I understand non-Christians wanting big titles like grand mufti, guru, imam, Supreme Ayatollah and so on, but Christians? Why then do we have: ARCH Bishop, Pastor General, Cardinal, Reverend, Monsignor (VERY reverend), Right Reverend, His Holiness or Your Holiness-- and on and on. Some insist they be called “MISTER” so-and-so – a variation of “Master”, when it’s a title. We have one Master, one Lord.

All this is from paganism, not God. Check out one of my earliest blogs titled, “I don’t call my brother Mr...”

- **The WEALTH of some clergy:** Yeshua sent out the 70 with the shirts on their backs (Luke 10:1-10). He did not send them out on the latest chariots, paid for by the tithes of the brethren, who are not typically the rich of the world. The Roman church borrowed this idea from Rome and the pagans too. Lavish homes and villas were the rule of the day. The wealthiest and most powerful were the cardinals and bishops. Have you seen the diamond rings on some of these guys on TV? Have you seen their limos and homes? Paul would have been disgusted.

My point to everyone is this: I could go on and on. But paganism has infiltrated the church of God, the body of Believers – even sabbath-keeping groups. Let’s open our eyes to it and reject it everywhere we can. For that matter, I don’t believe Father is confined to being in any of these organized box religions. I mean that: any of them.

The “Church” Yeshua founded was simple, uncluttered and was based on a FAMILY structure. God is our ONE Father. HE set the rules – called His Word. But now we have churches where hundreds of thousands of priests are all called “father” – contrary to what Jesus taught (Matthew 23:9). We have ONE God, who alone is our HOLY FATHER (John 17:11) – not any man.

This topic could go on and on, believe me! We can talk about how they’ve accepted the rulings of the Council of Nicea in 325 AD, the various other councils and edicts that established Sunday as the day of worship – to worship the venerable sun, as pagan emperor Constantine ruled in 321 AD. He actually “converted” to Christianity, he said, but then went on to do vicious things to so many, continued to honor the sun god on his coins, and pronounced the death penalty on anyone following what he called “the Jewish customs” of the sabbath and other beliefs. He despised “Judaizers”. So early believers were mostly Jews and they all kept the 7th day sabbath – just as I still do, though I’m NOT a Jew. Neither was Adam! He was aware of the 7th day sabbath, wasn’t he!? (Gen 2:1-3).

I talk about how the Roman church changed Sabbath to Sunday and other changes, in detail, on this website. See **Jan 2008 and March 2008 on this website** (www.lightontherock.org) for those sermons proving that the 7th day is STILL the sabbath day.

But basically the visible church in the 4th century and beyond began to copy Roman hierarchy, titles, glory, wealth, power, customs, pagan traditions – and what was called “Christianity” no longer bore any semblance to what we read in the Scriptures.

But we also have to talk about how JUDAISM got infiltrated with paganism too – as well as traditions that have no root in scripture. This has affected not only the Jews, but so many of my friends in the Hebrew Roots groups. I’ll talk about THAT next time as we start to get into “Rabbinic Judaism” – which hi-jacked the teachings of scripture and replaced them with man-made traditions! We’ll talk about how even they now teach a religion that WAS NOT the religion of Moses but hundreds of man-made rules that got codified – where? – BABYLON. They call their main Talmud the BABYLON Talmud. Hello, folks, that should give us all a clue.

SO whether you are Jew or Gentile, if you want to worship Yehovah, let's get back to His WORD on all things and NOT on traditions and NOT on paganism.

And NO- it's NOT alright to worship God with pagan festivities and it's even WORSE when we put His name on it, as we learned in the Gold Calf incident and other scriptures. Let's get back to the simplicity that is in Christ. Let's get back to what scripture actually says. Let's get back to being a loving family – and not knifing one another in the back – as each one seeks power and numbers of people and their numbers of tithes. Let's get back to being led by His spirit and working together as one, without hierarchy.

Until next time, this is Philip, your brother in our Messiah asking for blessings, peace and joy to all of you as you walk in *His* light. May our Father bless you, keep you, and watch over you and bring you peace.

www.LightontheRock.org